Lesson Guide
Lesson 3 - Anthropology: Who is Man?

Introduction
Lesson 3 takes us into the western regions of the compass, where we engage in an in-depth examination of biblical and contemporary ideas about the nature of the human race. The focus of the discussion is anthropology: Who is man? Where did he come from? What is the meaning and purpose of his existence? In the course of this study, Dr. Tackett demonstrates that the answers we bring to these questions have a direct bearing upon our approach to another pressing problem, one of the thorniest and most challenging of all – Why is there evil in the world?

Themes
Having established the importance of determining whether the cosmos is to be viewed as an open or a closed box, Dr. Tackett now moves on to examine another defining aspect of any comprehensive worldview: its basic assumptions about mankind. Here again we discover a fundamental conflict between Christianity and the perspective of contemporary culture. The Bible teaches that man consists of both body and spirit and is created in the image of God; our culture assumes that he is purely material, the product of mindless, purposeless forces. The Bible says that man has rebelled against God and fallen from his original state of innocence; contemporary thought maintains that he is “basically good.” The Bible affirms man’s need for divine grace, redemption, and regeneration; popular thinking asserts that “self-actualization” is the key to happiness and fulfillment.

Christianity represents evil as the product of the Cosmic Battle that rages within man – the conflict between humanity as it was meant to be and what it has actually become as a result of sin. Godless philosophy and psychology, on the other hand, can suggest only one possible solution to the problem of evil in the world: man must throw off the restraints of superimposed social conventions and institutions (i.e., any kind of moral standard) and pursue “self-fulfillment” to the fullest possible extent. This is what Dr. Tackett calls “the pernicious lie.”

Points to Watch for
Some viewers – even those who consider themselves Christians – may have difficulty accepting the idea that “self-fulfillment” and the call to “follow your heart” are inconsistent with a Christian worldview. Others may object to Dr. Tackett’s assertion that a great deal of the radical social and political activism we see in the world today is driven primarily by secular man’s sinful desire to throw off the shackles of “God’s social design.” All will find it stimulating and profitable to wrestle with the question he poses: why do non-believers and evolutionists find evil so troubling?
Discussion Questions

1) We looked at a number of things on this tour. Let’s list some of the key elements. What were they? Which ones do you think were most important or critical? Why?

2) Let’s discuss the truth claim that man is basically good. Do you see any evidence that our culture has bought this notion? What is that evidence? Do you think we live in a culture of “blame”? If so, how is that linked to the notion that man is basically good? What about “victim mentality”? Is that related? If so, how? What about the issue of “tolerance”? Any linkage? Why or why not?

3) Consider Maslow’s position that man must self-actualize by getting in touch their inner desires and bring them out. What are the consequences of this? Why would it give rise to hostility toward Christianity?

4) Let’s revisit the Carl Rodgers’ statement: “I do not find that evil is inherent in human nature.” What are the implications of this view of man in relation to what man really needs? What does it do to the biblical concept that man needs a Savior?

5) Why do Christians so often feel “stumped” when non-believers point to the existence of evil in the world? According to this discussion, what is the ultimate source of evil?

6) How does your worldview influence your definition of evil?

7) What are the major differences between the Bible’s view of man and autonomous man’s view of himself?

8) How might a person’s understanding of human nature and the meaning of human life determine his or her behavior or lifestyle? Given the basic distinctions between biblical and man-centered anthropology, how would we expect a believer’s behavior to differ from that of a non-believer?

9) How do differing views of mankind play into the social struggles and conflicts we see in our culture today?